

Montenegro ahead of the 2016 elections

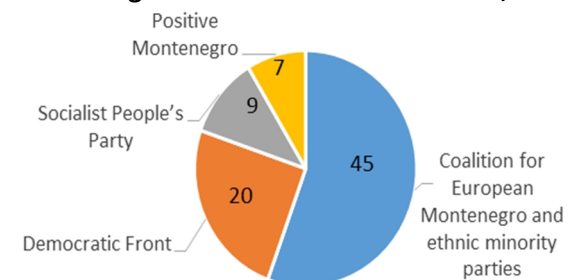
On 11 July 2016, Montenegro's President Filip Vujanović announced that the next parliamentary elections would be held on 16 October. They would be the tenth such elections since the introduction of the multiparty system in Montenegro and the fourth since the country regained independence in 2006. Unlike the 2012 elections, those of 2016 will be held in a polarised political context following a series of events that have shaken up the political dynamics since late 2015. For the first time in almost two decades, the ruling party has decided to run alone in the elections.

Montenegro's political system

Montenegro is a [parliamentary democracy](#). According to the [constitution](#), the president represents the country and is elected for a five-year term in direct, general elections by secret ballot. The current President, [Filip Vujanović](#), was elected in April 2013 and formally inaugurated a month later.

The prime minister is elected by the Parliament on a proposal from the president. The current Prime Minister, [Milo Djukanović](#), was elected in December 2012 following the victory of the Coalition for European Montenegro in the October 2012 elections. This is his sixth term in this role since 1991.

Montenegrin Parliament seat allocation, 2012



Source: [Montenegrin Parliament performance report, 2013](#)

[The Parliament of Montenegro](#) is a directly elected body with legislative and oversight responsibilities, a unicameral structure, and 81 Members elected for a four-year term. The Parliament, inter alia, adopts the constitution, laws and secondary legislation, approves the state budget, appoints and dismisses the prime minister and members of the government, and ratifies international treaties.

Electoral system

The October elections will be conducted under a revised legal framework, consisting of an amended Elections Law and of a further two laws adopted in 2014 as part of the [electoral reform](#), the Voter Register Law and the Financing of Legal Entities and Campaigns Law. Members of parliament are elected in a single nationwide constituency for a four-year term under a proportional representation system (a party list system with closed lists). Seats are distributed according to the highest average method (known as the [D'Hondt Method](#)). Parties or coalitions having obtained at least 3% of the total number of valid votes are entitled to parliamentary representation. [Special rules](#) apply for candidate lists representing national-minority communities. Citizens who are [18 years old](#) and have resided in the country for at least two years can vote and stand for elections.

Political crisis and cabinet reshuffle

Organising fair and democratic elections has been at the heart of the political debate since Montenegro regained independence. The current prime minister's [Democratic Party of Socialists \(DPS\)](#) has been in power since 1991. The opposition has repeatedly accused the government of [election fraud](#) and political corruption. Growing dissatisfaction with this issue brought about a [parliamentary boycott \(October 2015-May 2016\)](#) and sparked protests organised by the Democratic Front in the autumn of 2015. These resulted in [injuries](#) and damage to property. The fact that Montenegro's [invitation to NATO membership](#) took place around the same time raised suspicions that the protests were also directed against NATO. In December 2015, the Speaker of the Parliament, [Ranko Krivokapic](#), initiated the setting-up of a [working group](#) for parliamentary dialogue on



preparing fair and free elections. On 26 April 2015, the [EU-backed dialogue](#) resulted in an Agreement on creating conditions for free and fair elections, signed by representatives of the DPS, the SDP, Demos, the URA Civic Movement, the Bosniak Party, and the Social Democrats. In May 2016, the Parliament adopted a special law, [Lex specialis](#), on the implementation of this agreement, and approved a [government reshuffle](#). A new speaker of the Parliament was elected and the opposition obtained government posts, including those of the ministers of finance, of the interior, of agriculture and rural development, and of labour and social welfare, as well as that of deputy prime minister. Based on the agreement, the Parliament also formed several [committees for monitoring](#) different aspects of the electoral process. The Parliament also formally invited the OSCE/ODIHR to deploy an [election observation mission](#) consisting of 12 long-term and 100 short-term observers.

Montenegro is the region's best performer as regards the progress of its EU accession talks (24 chapters opened and two provisionally closed since 2012). However, in its [2015 progress report](#), the European Commission asked for all violent incidents during protests to be investigated, and all political forces to re-engage in a constructive political dialogue in the Parliament. Moreover, the subsequent European Parliament [resolution](#) of March 2016 called upon all opposition parties to consider entering the government before the October 2016 elections so as to ensure that they are free and fair. The European Parliament also highlighted that Montenegro needed to fully implement the new election laws, as was re-affirmed in the EU [position paper](#) from the seventh EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council Meeting. The EU welcomed the formation of a government of electoral trust, but also lamented the limited progress on investigations of violent incidents during the 2015 protests.

Main political parties

The centre-left Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) succeeded the League of Communists of Montenegro in 1991. Between 1990 and 1996, it ruled as the 'pro-Yugoslavia' party in alliance with Serbian leader [Slobodan Milosevic](#). After [Momir Bulatovic](#)'s pro-Milosevic faction was defeated in 1997, the anti-Milosevic wing headed by the current prime minister took the helm of the [block for Montenegrin independence](#). Since 2006, the DPS has ruled as [the state-making party](#) and as the European and Euro-Atlantic integration force in Montenegro.

The centre-left [Social Democratic Party](#) (SDP) was founded in 1993. It has been in a coalition with the DPS from the 1998 election until January 2016, when it backed a failed no-confidence vote in the government. Both parties are members of the [Party of European Socialists](#) (PES) at European level.

The right-wing coalition [Democratic Front](#) (DF) was founded in 2012 by the two opposition parties, [New Serbian Democracy](#) (NOVA) and the [Movement for Changes](#) (PzP), and by a cadre of senior members from the Socialist People's Party. NOVA is a pro-Serbian party founded in 2009 as a merger between the Serb People's Party and the People's Socialist Party of Montenegro. The [liberal conservative](#) PzP is a pro-European party founded in 2006 by a civic NGO. The main goal of the DF is to overthrow the DPS. Currently, the DF has gathered together eight other parties, three of which are represented in Parliament.

The [Key Coalition](#) is another opposition political alliance, consisting of three parties. The [Socialist People's Party of Montenegro](#) (SNP, centre-left), was founded in 1997 by the DPS's pro-Milosevic wing and former leader of the bloc for the continued 'State Union' with Serbia. Following the outcome of the 2006 independence referendum, SNP leader, [Predrag Bulatovic](#), resigned; its new leader, [Srdjan Milic](#), adopted a more pro-European agenda. Centre-right [Demos](#), the second Key Coalition member, was founded in 2015 by [Miodrag Lekic](#), who led the DF list in the 2012 parliamentary elections and ran in the 2013 presidential elections, supported by the DF and the SNP. The [United Reform Action](#) (URA, centre-left), founded in 2015 by former SDP member [Zarko Rakcevic](#), is the third coalition member. Other parties in the Montenegrin political spectrum include [Positive Montenegro](#) (centre), founded in 2012 by the current Speaker of Parliament [Darko Pajovic](#), which supported the DPS during the no-confidence vote in the government in January 2016; the [Democrats](#), led by former SNP leader [Aleksa Becic](#), and the [Social Democrats of Montenegro](#) (SD), founded by the defeated SDP intra-party faction following the victory of Ranko Krivokapic at the SDP Congress, were both founded in 2015. Founded in 2004, the [Liberal Party](#) (LP, center left) took part in the 2006 pro-independence movement and is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe ([ALDE](#)) party.

A total of [17](#) parties, including minority ones, will run in the forthcoming elections. In general, all parties are focused on economic issues, and endorse the integration of Montenegro into the EU.